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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

NEGLECTED ARABIA

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YOUNG ARAB SHEIKHS IN THE BASRAH BOARDING SCHOOL WITH TEACHERS
AND MR. AND MRS. VAN ESS

(See "A Program for Mesopotamia")

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NEGLECTED ARABIA

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THE ARABIAN MISSION

Beauty For Ashes

Mrs. EDWIN E. CALVERLEY, M.D.

While Christian missionaries are bringing the Gospel of Christ to the people of the Moslem world, Mohammedan missionaries are taking the Koran and the religion of Islam to Christian nations. It is said that in England a number of people have embraced the faith of Mohammed and that the teaching appeals especially to women. These western women are led to believe, we read, that Mohammedanism exalts womanhood.

To one who lives in the midst of down-trodden Moslem women, this statement is the height of absurdity. Would that those who hear and believe such a claim could visit Arabia and see for themselves a little of the heartache and despair brought about in the lives of Arab women by the very religion which is said to exalt them. Polygamy, concubinage, easy divorce and the teaching that women are inferior to men and were created for their usage, all these things make misery the most common feature in the experience of Arab women.

The evils of the system of Islam are not unknown to the readers of *NEGLECTED ARABIA*, and the denial of the statement that womanhood is exalted by Islam needs no defense. Nevertheless, it is true that the Moslem woman's religion means much to her. It is dear to her. She loves the very hand that bruises her. Why? There must be good in Mohammedanism. Let us look for the good, for the best that Islam has to offer. What is it that makes the Moslem woman love her religion?

It is difficult to analyze the soul's experience. Suppose an Arab woman should attempt to analyze the inner spiritual life of her Christian neighbor. The result would be interesting, no doubt, but how near would it come to the whole truth? The converse proposition, however, is not quite so difficult, for there is no injunction in the Koran similar to the command "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." Nor is there any instruction to "Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father in secret." Prayer, reading of the Koran, and all the observances of the Moslem religion are enacted with

great ostentation. Moreover, the natural reserve of the western woman is unknown to the daughter of the Orient. She talks freely on all subjects, no matter how sacred or intimate. The name of God and His attributes are an essential part of her speech. She can hardly express any idea, whether of surprise, admiration, desire, contempt, or kindly feeling without inserting some phrase of a religious nature. The more frequently she mentions God's name, the more merit she acquires. Consequently, with so much of her religion on the surface, she is not so hard to study as her western sister.



A MORNING CLINIC

On the other hand, as with Christians, so with Moslems, natures vary. How impossible it would be to generalize about the faith of the Mennonite, the Salvation Army lassie, and the society woman of high church connections. Yet all these are Christians. Things that could truthfully be said about one would have absolutely no application to either of the others. So also the Shia who beats her chest until she dies of exhaustion, weeping for the sorrows of her ancient hero Husain, is looked upon with scorn by her Mohammedan neighbors of the Sunnite sect. Nor is there any great similarity between the Moslem woman of devout religious nature and her more frivolous sister with whom the things of this world weigh more heavily than those of the next.

Our present effort at analysis claims neither to be complete nor exhaustive. Rather it is the idea to put together some of the observations we have made while associating with our friends in the harems and to

deduct from them what a woman who wanted to become a Moslem might expect to gain, of hope, of comfort and of courage from the religion of Mohammed.

I have never seen an atheist nor an agnostic among the women of Arabia. Great and small, good and bad, they all believe with unswerving faith in Allah, the "Creator of the universe, and in Mohammed His messenger." Their belief is also in a way, an affectionate one. Not that they would think of God as heavenly Father, but it is not uncommon to hear an unfortunate person exclaim: "I have no one left to me but Allah!" Not only have they faith in Allah, but they believe also in jinns, in demon possession, in enchantments, and all kinds of charms and magic. It seems never to occur to them to doubt the truth of the supernatural. Everything that falls to the lot of man is "from Allah." Everything which may or may not happen depends "upon Allah." Man cannot in any way escape what is written on his forehead, his fate. There is a certain amount of comfort in fatalism, for it leaves no room for regret or remorse. It takes away something of the agony of responsibility. "What is to be will be." What has happened was ordered by Allah. What use to chafe or to fret? Allah is merciful and kind, no matter how cruel His decrees. He has sent evil or good according to His desire. What is left to the believer but to submit to the inevitable? In spite of this, fatalism does not, it can not, prevent worry and mental pain.

To us the desire for reward is a mean and selfish motive. Not so to the Moslem. A higher motive seems not to be desired. One's reward in Paradise may be increased, in much the same way as one would augment his bank account. Almost daily some one of the patients in the dispensary is heard to explain to another that the missionaries treat poor people free in order to secure merit for so doing. Sometimes blind women are led to the dispensary for treatment by neighbors who desire the reward for this act of kindness. Many kind deeds are performed in this way. Strangely enough, in emergencies, when pressing need arises for someone to render real, self-sacrificing service to a fellow Moslem, no one seems to be ambitious to increase his heavenly account in just that particular way. How frequently do we hear the comment from Mohammedans themselves: "You Christians are merciful; mercy is unknown to Moslems."

Merit may be gained by giving alms, and almsgiving is very generally practiced by the rich. Even in homes of slender means the remains of the Arabs meals are regularly handed out to the hungry beggar who brings his bowl to the gate of the courtyard. It is seldom necessary for the poor to suffer from hunger. "Give me," they call out at the doorways, "of what belongs to God." I have never heard to such an appeal a harsh or unkind answer.

The sacred book of the Moslems is the Koran, but the reading of this book does not resemble our own study of the Bible. The reading is done in a loud and chanting tone, paying more attention to the rhythm of the words than to the meaning. The woman who can read the Koran, and

the majority of women never learn to read, gains great merit by each completion of the recitation from cover to cover. She can divert this merit to the account of some departed loved one or she may sell it to another person who is willing to pay for the act of reading. So far as I know, the Moslem woman never goes to her book, as we do to the Bible, for comfort, instruction, or guidance.

Prayer is an important part of the Moslem's life. Yet their prayers do not correspond to the Christian's prayer life. Five times in twenty-four hours the prayer-crier climbs to the top of his minaret and gives the call to worship for the faithful. Prayer must not be undertaken unless the body is ceremonially clean. Some sicknesses are considered defiling, and until the patient recovers he is not allowed to pray. A bandage is often the object of much concern to a devout woman. "How can I pray?" she will ask. "Can I pour the water for my ablutions over the bandage, or will you allow me to take the bandage off?" She could not pray at all unless she had made the prescribed ablutions. The prayer itself is a stated formula, accompanied by various changes in posture, erect, kneeling, or prostrating. It is performed slowly and with great dignity, facing toward Mecca, the holy city. The worshipper stands, if possible, upon a choice rug, or at least in a clean place. At sunset, one comes across praying Moslems on the seashore, on the sail-boats beached along the water's edge, on the verandahs of the hospital, and in almost every conceivable place. In the midst of a social call upon the missionaries Moslem ladies will excuse themselves, and, selecting a rug in the room, will perform their prayers in quietness and solemnity while their hostess waits.

Prayer seems to be looked upon as a duty. It is Allah's right to be worshipped by those He has created. Those who fulfil this duty acquire merit; those who do not are laying up trouble for themselves in the future. There is an approach to our idea of prayer in the ejaculatory supplications used so commonly by Moslems at all times. "May Allah give you strength!" "May Allah prolong your life!" Grateful patients sometimes exclaim: "Since you have relieved me of my sufferings, I have not ceased from asking blessing for you day or night." Such statements refer to these ejaculatory appeals or to petitions offered at the close of the formal worship. It seems that the person needing guidance or wisdom would not think of going apart to seek it from the heavenly source. But one who is in need of help really appreciates the spoken supplication of his friends and thinks they may be answered in his behalf.

In times of pain the Moslem sufferer calls loudly upon the name of Allah. "O Allah," she implores, "have mercy upon Thy creature. O my Lord, my dear Lord, my Beloved, deliver me from this pain!" "O Mohammed! O Allah! Thou Merciful One! Thou Most Merciful of the merciful! Look upon my plight!" And so, hour after hour. Those about respond at intervals, "He is faithful! He is merciful! He will help those who trust in Him!"

If relief delays, portions of the Koran, tied up in little bundles, and covered with leather, are hung about the patient's neck. She is brought a staff upon which someone, while praying in a mosque, has leaned, and told to grasp it in her hands, that virtue may come out of it to her. Someone comes in bearing a cup containing a contribution of saliva from the mouth of a man who has just finished worshipping in a mosque. This saliva, they say, has great healing power, and it is to be swallowed by the one in pain. This failing, a paper, on which verses from the Koran are written, is washed in water and the inky fluid is given to the sufferer to drink. A reader is secured who reads the sacred book in low and mumbling tones above the patient's head. A Moslem friend of mine who had a headache once asked me if I would not read my book above her head to cure her pain.

Prayer in the mosque or public place of worship is said to bring twenty-seven times more merit to the believer than prayer in other places. Yet Arab women are not allowed to pray within the mosque.

How great is the gulf between the Moslem woman's prayer life and our own! Still, Moslem women seem to get real comfort from the performance of their acts of worship.

God's favor toward an individual is said to be greatly increased when that person has performed the sacred pilgrimage to Mecca, or, in the case of the Shia sect, to Kerbela as well. This means the endurance of hardship, of dangers of robbers, or of perils of the sea. It is the dearest desire of many a woman's heart to visit her sacred shrine before she dies. One day we were called to see a woman who was dying. "How fortunate!" rejoiced her friends, "that she is dying now, for she has just returned from Mecca, and her immediate entrance into Paradise is sure!"

So also during the fast month of Ramadhan, the doors of heaven are said to be wide open, and all those true believers who die during the month pass directly into Paradise, without having first to go into purgatory, as other Moslems must. Many Moslem women fast willingly, because they believe it to be the command of their Lord. Others fast perforce, because they would be punished if they did not. From earliest dawn till sunset not a particle of food, nor a drop of water, must pass their lips. They will not even allow medicine to be dropped into their eyes, for this might find its way into the throat, and so be swallowed. Some people practice deceit and eat or drink when no one is looking. For years the month of Ramadhan has fallen in the summer time, so that those who fast suffer most from thirst. The month is a trial to all, and some become ill. But the merit for such self-denial is believed to be great. In the evenings great feasts are held and lights are kept burning and merriment continues until the morning. In the daytime several hours are passed in sleep. Children are given simple meals, for they are not expected to abstain from food. During our first year of language study, at Bahrein, we witnessed for the first time the Moslem fast of Ramadhan. At last the time for the great final feast was at hand, and one evening

expert eyes, strained in watching, detected the faintest crescent of a silvery moon in the dying glory of the sunset sky. At once a great commotion began. Guns were fired, men and boys shouted, and women lifted up their voices in loud trills of exultation. The long and difficult days of fasting were at an end!

The next morning we were awakened from our slumbers by a sound of wondrous melody. The dawn had hardly broken. In the cool of the early morning, a tenor voice was raised in rapturous chant. On and on it went, in thrilling, melting sweetness. We lay enchanted, fearing lest we miss one single note of beauty. And then the voice sank in silence. Had it been a dream? We hurried to the window and there another surprise awaited us. In the courtyard of the mosque across the road,



RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASTS BEATING BREASTS ON A FEAST DAY

were gathered hundreds and hundreds of Moslem men, gay in their brilliant, festive headgear, embracing one another, kissing one another, and rejoicing in the advent of the greatest Moslem holiday of all the year. Is it wrong, this religion in which exists such real æsthetic beauty? "By their fruits ye shall know them," and even beauty has no power to change the blackness of the sinful heart.

Another element in the Moslem religion, as it affects the women, is the spirit of fanaticism or intolerance. When one has seen the curl of scorn on the lips of the Mohammedan woman, dirty and ignorant though she may be, as she listens to the Gospel preached by a Christian mission-

ary, one begins to suspect the depths of hatred and conceit in the Moslem heart. That the Christian has education, skill, or a position demanding respect, has no weight with her. An infidel is an infidel and cursed forever. Let not his shadow fall on a true believer. Better die of thirst than drink from a cup-polluted by unbelieving lips. True, years of work and the ministry of friendship, on the part of the missionaries, have softened this feeling of hatred until, in some places, we think it has almost disappeared. It is there, though, underneath the surface, for it is the essential spirit of Islam, the spirit without which Islam would be a leopard without its spots.

To the Christian woman death hath no sting, the grave no victory, because Christ has assured her, "I go to prepare a place for you." Earth's sorrows will be forgotten when she sees His face. "For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." Has the Moslem woman any comfort such as this? Alas, the Moslem paradise is pictured as a place of sensual pleasure, for people there are not to be as the angels of God in heaven, and the Mohammedan woman expects to take her place beside the Houries, fair maidens, ever virgins. The Koran reads: "And theirs (the men's) shall be the Houries, with large dark eyes, like pearls hidden in their shell, in recompense for their labors past." One of the traditions relates: "The Apostle of God said, 'Verily, verily there is a tent for every Moslem in Paradise; it is made of one pearl, and in every corner of it will be his wives, and they shall not see one another.'" Another tradition declares: "The Apostle of God said, 'He who is least among the people of Paradise shall have eighty thousand slaves and seventy-two women, and has a tent pitched for him of pearls, rubies and emeralds.'" Thus are women exalted in the Paradise of Islam.

A Moslem friend of ours is dying. She is a reader, of the Shia sect. She has made the pilgrimage to Kerbela. She has reason to be assured of merit awaiting her in the other world. And yet, I cannot forget the look of terror upon this woman's face. Most Moslem women are afraid of death, but there are exceptions.

One of the sources of the strength of Islam seems to be in the simplicity of its creed. "There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is Allah's Messenger." Should anyone pronounce these words with his dying breath, he is considered a true Moslem, and his entrance into Paradise is sure. "Witness, witness!" urge the friends around the bedside of a dying man or woman. Then come the gasping words, "La Allah il' Allah, wa Mohammed rasul Allah," and the spirit takes its flight.

A few days ago some of us were talking about our Shia friend who is approaching death. "Have you ever seen a Moslem woman face death with a look of joy upon her face?" I asked one of the other missionary ladies. "No," she replied, "I have not seen any appearance of joy, but I have witnessed the death of one Arab woman who seemed to find comfort

in her creed. It was the poor woman," she continued, "whose back was broken by a falling wall. She had suffered pitifully but patiently and with resignation. She was more helpless in her sickness than the youngest infant, and entirely dependent upon the missionaries in whose hospital she died. Tenderly her Christian friends had cared for her, considering no service too menial or dishonorable to perform. 'Not one of my Moslem friends would do these things for me,' the patient would exclaim during these labors of love, as she drew down the missionary's head and kissed her on the hair. 'They would not defile themselves for me, no matter how I suffered.' Her gratitude was touching, and yet, when she was about to die, she motioned desperately for us to leave the bedside. We were infidels to her, and our presenece was to be feared at so critical a time. Then fellow Moslems took their place beside her bed and one began to wave protecting fingers over the pain-racked body, as she recited the all-potent words of the Moslem creed. It made us sick at heart," said the speaker, "for her faith was pinned unwaveringly to those vain words, while bravely and unflinchingly her spirit went out into the darkness."



WOMEN WASHING CLOTHES ON THE SEA BEACH

Has it power, the religion of Mohammed, has it power over sin? Can it cleanse the human heart? No, my friends, I have never heard a Moslem claim that it could. "You are good," they tell us. "You do not understand the work of the devil, as we Moslems do. We are not afraid of you. You would not harm us. We are afraid of one another. We are afraid of one another's envy, and of our rivals' hatred. You do not understand. It is from the devil. You don't know anything about it." They mean it, too. They are sincere. The vileness of the sin that lurks in the heart of the Moslem woman is beyond our comprehension. The speech that often issues from behind the jealous veil would make you blush for shame. Ah! Mohammed, you can cleanse the outside of the platter, but you cannot take away the corruption that lies within.

Have we anything to offer our Moslem sisters, anything better than what they have? Listen a minute! There is music. A group of Arab women are visiting the missionaries. One of the hostesses is playing the baby organ, while the others sing in Arabic. The Moslem guests pay rapt attention. This is something new, it gives them pleasure; and the words, what do they mean?—

“What a friend we have in Jesus, . . .
 Can we find a Friend so faithful,
 Who will all our sorrows share?
 Jesus knows our every weakness,
 Take it to the Lord in prayer.
 Are we weak and heavy laden,
 Cumbered with a load of care?
 Precious Saviour, still our refuge,
 Take it to the Lord in prayer . . .
 In His arms He'll take and shield thee,
 Thou wilt find a solace there.”

It is very new to the Arab guests, and very different from anything they have ever heard before.

We have an Arab friend who used to be a Moslem. I wish you could hear her sing those words in Arabic. She knows what they mean, and she loves them. She knows Christ Himself. He is her Saviour. It is He who has put the look of joy upon her face and the song upon her lips. Ask her what Christ has to offer the women of Islam, what He has given her. She will tell you He has given her the beauty of His living Presence, for the ashes of a dead and powerless faith.

The Maskat Band

MISS FANNY LUTTON.

We have many musicians in Maskat. Their musical instruments are various—various in shape, material, and tone. One negro, who is almost as famous among some of his hearers as is Paganini, makes his own instrument out of a dried calabash, skin, some strings of wire, and a bow composed of two thin datepalm sticks. I have seen this man quite entranced with his own efforts; although I could not distinguish any musical sound whatever; and he is in great demand for the dances and musical festivals. Others have horns of animals which they blow for hours. At some of their all-night concerts, which frequently last from 8 p. m. to 4.30 a. m., they toot these horns in-

cessantly; in fact, Maskat is so musical that it is very hard for newcomers to get a good night's rest. It was distracting to me at first, but I have become hardened and unconscious of the din and let them toot away; and I sleep through it all because it frequently is really my reason for retiring.

But all this is digression or preface to my musical article. Within the last few years a wonderful change has come to Maskat. We have a real band of musicians and that is why I have put the above definite title to my article. The Sultan once went to Bombay and saw many wonderful things, such as people riding in carriages, good roads, water running through pipes, trains; and he also saw and heard several bands of musicians. I think, personally, it was the big drum that impressed him first and most of all. He began to have wonderful visions of a Maskat Band. When he returned to poor, little, primitive Maskat his dreams took shape and form, and, finally, action. He sent first for a band-master, then for the instruments; and the band was formed from young, raw recruits of his own soldiers. Now, after four years of practice, we have a band that can discourse really fairly good music.

There are two public recitals every week—on Wednesday evenings and on Friday afternoons. When the first musical was to be held I was invited by the ladies of the Palace to spend the evening with them. The first selection was, "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep, Have You Any Wool?" I informed the Sultana and princesses and ladies-in-waiting that I knew the song, and I sang it, although it is so long since my childhood days. I was loudly applauded and the comments were very flattering and flowery. They said, "She is clever" and "She knows everything." I am too modest to recount any more compliments. But now we really have good selections and up-to-date, even "It's a Long Way to Tipperary." The band-master is to be highly complimented, for out of what seemed almost impossible material he has developed good musicians. And now let me tell, before I wind up this musical article, that the Sultan had no national anthem. So one of his Sheikhs, who is an ancient retainer, composed the poem and the band-master composed the tune; and now, at the end of all these musical entertainments, the Sultan's National Anthem of Maskat is played. One very significant incident impressed me very much. One of their great religious feasts was celebrated in the very early morning, with musical selections and one of the pieces played was to the tune of "There is a Fountain Filled with Blood." All around them the blood was flowing from animals that were slain because on that day they celebrated the great sacrifices that are offered up in Mecca. The Sultan and his listeners had no idea of the significance of the hymn tune, nor of its meaning; but as I heard the strains of that sacred hymn I prayed that the day would come when they would know of the "Fountain that has been opened for sin and uncleanness" and "have their sins washed away."

A Program For Mesopotamia

REV. JOHN VAN ESS.

You cannot make a dead man alive by warming him. In fact you thus only hasten the process of putrefaction. You cannot make a corpse much more attractive by dressing it up in fine clothes, though you may be sure of spoiling the clothes. The Paris Conference cannot regenerate Mesopotamia. I am just as sanguine of what will be done there for Arabia as any man, and will be as loyal to any scheme of British mandate as John Bull himself. But no program can remake the Arab himself save a program which brings him into touch with the source of life. Such a program lies before me. It is a humble document, nine inches by four, which I typed myself. Yet if I can keep myself rigidly to that program, amid many distractions, I shall have done more for Mesopotamia than any man in Paris.

The document contains the schedule of the Boys' School, drawn up in ten columns, covering the branches taught in a ten-year course. However, of these ten columns only the sixth is really important. It outlines the process by which the pupil is brought face to face with Jesus Christ and is kept facing Him until his eyes are filled with Him and his head understands that His wisdom is the highest wisdom. The smallest boys receive a half-hour daily in Bible stories, beginning with the Old Testament. It is interesting to hear the eight-year-old son of a Bedouin sheikh give the story of Abraham's life. When he told of Ishmael's mocking the new-born heir he went into detail and improvised the exact terms in which Ishmael mocked. Some of the language was not chaste but it certainly was Ishmaelitic. David before Goliath also appeals to their imagination and the language with which the giant cursed David is more picturesque than edifying. It throws new light on the Bible to hear these truths after they have passed through the brain of these who are also sons of Abraham.

When they have thoroughly assimilated the idea of God, of His covenant relationship with man and of man's pitiable failure to live up to that covenant, they are introduced to the story as found in Matthew. Matthew is chosen for various reasons: first, because it was written specifically for the sons of Shem and is thus most easily grasped; second, because it contains so much that Islam recognizes with the added spiritual implications which Islam totally lacks, as for example, divorce, uncleanness, alms, prayer and fasting; third, because it contains the Beatitudes in a form most easily learned, as well as the Lord's Prayer. The study is intensive, and by means of maps and drawings the geography and terminology of the Gospel are thoroughly learned. Then follows a study of the Life of Christ in a series of two hundred and fifty questions with references to all the gospels. The whole object of this course is to present the whole Christ—an appallingly difficult task—not my idea of Christ, or my interpretation of Christ, or the theological implications of Christ, but Christ Himself. Try it yourself. Imagine yourself before a person

who knows nothing of the true Christ, or has at best a rudimentary acquaintance with Him. Then strip yourself of all theological formulæ, all doctrinal preferences, all controversial impulse, and center your efforts on presenting the Christ as He was, what He did, what He said, what the result was. I think you will find yourself tempted to use a large amount of Pauline terminology, and forget the fact that Paul was converted by a vision of Christ Himself, and only after his conversion did he write his epistles. I find that a convert reads Paul's epistles with relish and is edified thereby, but I have no experience here of a Moslem being thus brought to Christ. I have little experience in the American pulpit, but it is fair to assume that the naked soul of man is the same everywhere. It has brought me up standing to see how hard it is for me to present Christ Himself.

With Christ thus presented as the fit focus and fulfillment of revelation, the next step is an outline study of the whole Bible. The opening question is, "What cannot be learned about God from nature?" and the final answer elicited shows, what sin is and how to be saved therefrom. The Old Testament books are then studied in outline, and the unity in purpose of all, the Old Testament characters are reviewed and the life of Christ resurveyed, followed by a course in the Acts and a history of the spread of Christianity. The last course is in the Principles of Jesus, based on Speer's book, the object being the personal appeal to each boy.

How do the Moslems take all this? The answer thereto is the fact that the schools are fuller than ever before. A Moslem is quick to realize that the religious motive is the highest motive which can actuate a man. Though our activities are so unalterably anti-Islam, yet they recognize the cogency of the motive and respect us for our loyalty thereto. In fact, as they say, "Men khan Allah khan abdullah" (He who betrays God will betray man).

As a practical example of how Moslems think, the following incident is enlightening. During the last year of the Turkish régime we had our annual prize-giving. All the leading officials were present, from the governor and the commander of the troops down, also sheikhs, tribal and religious. In the speech winding up the ceremonies I said: "There is one thought in the minds of you all, 'If only these Americans would eliminate their persistent Gospel effort.' But," I added, "the day we cease to teach the Bible in our schools that day I would advise you to take out your children, for that day we have become traitors to God and to what we have been taught to regard as the highest and holiest in life." And the sentiment was applauded to the echo. In a land like this to be religious is good politics as well as good religion.

To sum it all up. Therein lies the hope for the regeneration of Mesopotamia, to hold up Jesus Christ so that the Arabs shall see Him. Good roads, telegraphs, strict justice, education, social service, these are all necessary, but after all they are only incidental inasmuch as they touch only symptoms or are only symptomatic. The christianizing of this land may take centuries, but then a Christian has the right to think in centuries. In fact he is the only one who has that right.

Life, Language and Religion

MRS. DIRK DYKSTRA.

There are some expressions which the missionary in Arabia hears daily. These are like high walls behind which the Moslems take refuge from all that is unpleasant and unpalatable in their own religion, from all those experiences in life, physical and spiritual, which are perplexing and which they cannot and are afraid to explain. And behind these high walls they put at rest their consciences and say, "Peace, peace." It must be admitted that almost all of these expressions contain some element of truth and that the origin of most of them is in God's own Word. And because of this it is most difficult to get the Moslems to see the fallacy of their own statements, for here too your missionary finds that,

"A lie which is half a truth is ever the greatest of lies,
Since a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought outright,
But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight."

Perhaps more than any other expression is heard, "In sha allah," "If God wills." The phrase very often means little more than "maybe," "all right," "by and by," used to evade responsibility, or as a polite, easy, and indisputable way to escape doing what is not agreeable, or possible, or intended. You ask a Moslem to come to a meeting, to do a piece of work, to visit you, to consult the physician, and invariably the answer is, "In sha allah!" You try to point to purity and truth, you urge them to observe God's precepts, to awaken a desire to live a higher, holier life, and there is that non-committal answer. Do you remonstrate, being convinced that these are only excuses, evading of responsibilities, do you try to tell them that God wills the doing of one's duty, of right, of seeking Him and walking in His ways, there is still that same imperturbable, persistent answer.

Directly connected with this expression is, "Keteb allah aleina," "God decreed it over us." While for the Christian predestination does not relieve man of his responsibility, for the Moslem it becomes a means of disclaiming all responsibility. "In sha allah" prefaces an action, "Keteb allah aleina" explains it after it has happened. A three-year-old child played with matches and was burned to death. It is God who decreed it so and as good Moslems they must submit. A woman had ophthalmia. Her own daughter had become blind through neglect and she was urged the more earnestly to go for treatment while there was still a chance to help her. She gave the usual answer, "If God wills," but she did not come. Now the eye is gone and she says unabashed, "God wrote it over me." How could a Moslem be expected to question that statement, how could he accomplish anything against that! Ignorance, neglect, bitter fanaticism, dumb resignation, fierce pride in everything Moslem, all help the people to continue to use this phrase which is only partly true and mostly a lie.

But it is in a woman's life that the greatest blight has fallen because of this false teaching. A woman is loved and hated, married and divorced, caressed and beaten, appeased and cursed, at the caprice of a man, and all is his by right. It is to these suffering women that the missionary ladies go. Sometimes it is patriotism, sometimes it is religious pride, and sometimes it is just natural reticence, or fear of seeming to criticize their Maker, that causes them to bear in silence all the indignity and injustice of their lot, and to assent to their customs that they are good, but no woman who has learned to trust the missionaries ever defends her state.

But it must not be thought that the women are waiting for their release with outstretched arms. Centuries of repression and domination have worked out their curse and though the women may see and know



ON THE EDGE OF AN ARABIAN TOWN

their bitter lot it is quite another matter to instill initiative to break away from the beaten track. A mother was trying to correct her seven-year-old boy but he refused to be corrected and got a stick and began to beat her about the head. And all she thought of saying was, "What can I do? I am only a woman." A bright and interesting young woman of high birth, to whom the Gospel came home with noted effect, replied, "But what can I do? We women are never allowed to go anywhere, not even outside of the door of the compound, without special permission. Suppose I did accept your religion, what would happen to me? I would never be allowed to do that." Another woman has been labored with for years. She knows the truth and has admitted its claims upon her and yet she holds back. She does not dare to decide as she knows she ought, the future is too painful, and so her only answer to each invi-

tation is, "What can I do? If I were in your country, yes, but not here."

For financial reasons, a young woman of inferior position was married into an influential family while she was still very young. She became the mother of a little girl and then the husband died. The family turned the mother out after they had secured the guardianship of the child. The mother has tried every possible way to reclaim her girl and has grown hard and bitter in the process, but all in vain. Another mother, widowed and remarried, has just been forced to give up her twelve-year-old daughter to male relatives who have more claim to the girl than she has. These mothers have tried, they have not helplessly accepted their lot, but both have been forced to say, "What can I do? There is no hope, no use trying." And so this paralyzing, hopeless wail is heard day after day and almost compels us to excuse them and join them as they say, "Allah wahid," "God is one." This is the Moslem's boast and as he says it he despises all those who are not of his faith. Allah wahid, so he confesses, but he denies it when he says the Jews have Moses, the Christians have Jesus and the Moslems have Mohammed. Allah wahid, but He decreed over Moslem women polygamy, free divorce, slavery and degradation, but over Christian women honor and affection between husband and wife, faithfulness till death. Allah wahid, who has appointed eternal happiness for those that do good and eternal punishment for evildoers, and yet the most hardened criminal expects God's mercy, somehow, to secure for him an entrance into Paradise the blest because he is a Moslem. And so this great truth is bandied about, tossed back and forth without apparent influence upon their lives. In the most trivial way this phrase is used. Shall the sewing be done with single or double thread? Single will do. Yes, why not, God is one. A hostess has only one cup to serve coffee to her guests. She may have looked for another but failed to find it, and so to cover her own embarrassment she says, "One cup is enough, God is one." After refreshments are served and the finger-bowl has been used, some thirsty one proceeds to drink the water from that same bowl, to your astonishment and the shocking of your sensibilities. And the argument is that by so doing there will be no envy or enmity amongst the present company. "God is one, we are one." Later, perhaps even before parting, these same people, who are full of jealousies and family feuds, are eager to slander each other and fan the fires of envy and hatred. Truly they have the form of godliness but deny the power thereof.

Another stock phrase is, "Netekkel ala Allah," "We trust in God." During the last epidemic of plague when many were inoculated, a greater number scorned to stoop to such devilish, infidel, Christian measures. Again and again this expression was heard, and so often in such proud, defiant tones. The Moslem is a fatalist, and in all new-fangled ideas such as inoculation and modern medical treatment, he practices, to his own hurt, this slogan, "We trust in God," but in all things native to his own environment he seems to believe in proving his faith by his works,

though he may not be acquainted with St. James. At least, so their dependence upon magic, charms and kindred usages seem to say. Since last winter a convert has been staying on the Mission compound. Not long ago the mother of this convert came to us and sprinkled a reddish powder all over the place and buried some in the ground. The ingredients of this powder were kettle black, red dye, and dirt from a special spot in the Shiah cemetery. It had to be their own cemetery to make it effective. The hoped-for effect of this magic was to make us hateful in the eyes of the convert by causing us to become immoral and evil, and so win her back to Islam. Of course the mother believed in this, but



AN ARAB FAMILY

even the daughter was a bit worried about us for several days. And when it became known what had been done, many who pride themselves on their independence of thought and their broader views, in spite of it all, were quite alarmed about us. But though the Moslem's trust in God may be so mixed with things of the earth, earthy, there are times when they too are forced to realize that none but God can help, as during the plague this spring. During these days of gloom and fear and death through which they have just passed, their confession, "We trust in God," has been the one ray of hope for many, and in it they have found

some comfort for their fearful, trembling hearts, some courage to face the days of terror and pestilence which surrounded them.

"El hamdu lillah," "Praise be to God." How many, many times a day is that heard. Outwardly, the Moslem, literally in everything, gives thanks. He says it after a sneeze, and it is the answer to the day's greeting. The phrase is attributed to the cock that crows, it is quoted by laughing, quarreling children who do not realize what they say. It serves to fill a pause in the conversation, it is said in love and hate, in joy and sorrow, upon good report and evil. The habit the Moslems have of saying, "El hamdu lillah" is sometimes very annoying. For instance, when the doctor visits his patient and asks how he is, the first answer is, "El hamdu lillah." "Did you rest well last night?" "El hamdu lillah." "Is the pain less this morning?" "El hamdu lillah." And so on, much to the vexation of the busy physician, but the Moslem does not intend to make himself guilty of appearing to blame his Maker for any condition in which he may find himself.

"Allah kereem," "God is merciful." The Moslems grievously abuse this beautiful promise. Without doubt many use it rightly, but so often their use of it reminds one of Paul's words, "What then, shall we sin that grace may abound?" The poor beggar in the street might be helped if he would but work; but no, begging is easier, and "God is merciful, He will provide." As in poverty this phrase is their refuge, so also when they are brought face to face with an unpleasant duty which they want to shirk. Rather than by God's help to try to do what is difficult, they trust to some luck that may turn to their account, by God's "mercy." If they are tempted to do wrong, though fully conscious of it, they say, "Allah keereem," and do their own sweet pleasure, repenting at leisure, and trusting God to help them out when they are come into distress. Even though in their own religion they are taught the wrath of God and eternal punishment, the sinner pleads his own weakness and says, "What can I do? The devil got hold of me. We are the sons of Adam. God is merciful." Or he says, "I will say in *that* hour 'I ask pardon of God,' and God is merciful, I trust in Him."

"Taht eth-tharoureh," "Under compulsion," is something one hears much, but it is not well understood. It has connections with spirits, apparently evil ones. These spirits are called "zeeraan," visitors, and they are able to compel the individual visited to do certain things. It is said that an Arab here is host to such visitors every Friday and then he is compelled to dress like a woman, including her jewelry and hair decorations. He is not seen on that day by anyone! Another case was a woman in our hospital who was nursing a sick daughter. One morning the mother was gone, and after some questioning the daughter said that the mother had been visited by these "zeeraan" during the night and they told her she must leave the hospital at once in the morning, or they would "slaughter" her. The mother rose in fear, and in great haste, very early, she left the hospital and city. Another woman who died of plague this spring, was always known as "Nooreh who has 'zeeraan.'"

There very often were days when no one could see her and when anyone inquired after her the answers were always evasive and suggestive, and it was understood that she was not at liberty to see anyone. There seems to be only one compensation held out to such afflicted ones, that is, that they go directly to Paradise with no purgatory to endure at all. And so while those so visited in this life are looked upon as afflicted ones, and in speech at least, objects of commiseration, in reality they are objects of pride and walk about with a halo over them.

"Istehee" and "aib" mean "to be bashful," "shame." Sometimes the wish rises in one's heart that it would be possible to efface these words from the Arabic language, especially when dealing with the women. Men need not be modest, nothing seems to be cause for shame in them, even their shame becomes their boast and their pride. It is the woman who must keep in the background, who must show modesty and bashfulness in all things. The old adage, "Children must be seen, not heard," here should be, "Women must neither be seen nor heard." This false teaching about the inferiority of womanhood and the glorification of man because of his wonderful superiority is the cause of all these ideas of modesty and shame. These two words are sometimes used interchangeably and the only difference seems to be that "istehee" is connected with things and actions which may have a moral bearing, while "aib" may be so used, but is very much more used in connection with dress, custom and similar things. The whole system of Islam is so permeated with sensuality and carnal relations that the word "Istehee" is seldom used except when a woman has some dealing with the men, whether business, social or otherwise. A woman, however much she may appreciate it, is too bashful to return a courteous greeting from one of our men missionaries, but no sense of modesty before God prevents her taking His holy name in vain. To defile themselves with unseemly and vulgar conversation is too common to be noticed, but if the doctor must examine an eye, extract a tooth, or examine a wound, they feel too virtuously modest to allow it. And these same women who are too modest to dare to return a greeting or face the doctor in the clinic are not too modest to transgress the laws of God in secret. It is not the sinning that is the shame, but to be caught at it. Many a woman lives an adulterous life secretly, and though it is known nothing is said, but for such a woman to confess it is a shame, and when she tries to break away from such a life then only is she slandered. To beg, to ask for a present, to use another's property, to leave debts unpaid, to "sponge" on somebody's generosity, to refuse help to the needy and those in trouble is no shame, but to do good, honest work is a thing to be ashamed of, unless it can be done without sacrifice to pride and custom.

Thus even the hospitality of the Arab becomes a stumbling block to him, for only too often is he influenced by pride, and not seldom the poorest are the proudest in this matter. Not long ago one of the missionaries called on a poor diver. Custom demanded that coffee be served but there was none in the house and the man was too poor to buy, but

that did not phase the host. He asked his guest to stay for refreshments and quite insisted upon it. It might have been interesting to see what would have happened had the invitation been accepted, but innocent of existing conditions, it was refused, though the host insisted that the coffee was ready. Later his wife told about it and said that it was not the lie that he had told that bothered the man, but he was ashamed that coffee was not always on hand in his house. This same man buys coffee before any other household necessity, for "It must not be said that the sound of pounding coffee is not heard in my house, that we are poor." The Arabs have a word that means a present one gives upon returning from a journey. A poor woman is being helped with work in an industrial sort of a



A DOMESTIC SCENE

way, and this same woman insists upon bringing presents to her employers whenever she returns from a stay in a neighboring town, because it is customary to do so, and then without shame she comes to them for financial help. Another went to visit some friends. She was poor but she had to have money for presents, so she robbed a poorer woman, taking her chicken to the market and so securing her gifts. The theft was no shame but to pay the visit, carrying no presents, was. A family in comfortable circumstances were not ashamed to borrow constantly from very poor neighbors and all that was borrowed was never returned. The borrowers were not ashamed to ask while the lenders did not dare to refuse, for that would be shame. To wear torn and filthy clothes is no

shame but to patch them is. The men would rather go unclothed than wear a gown that is stitched with cotton and not with silk. It is a shame to be known as eating eggs, they are too cheap an article of food. A woman will sell her purity for a mess of pottage, and will walk about in clothing which is the price of sin, rather than subject herself to the ridicule of people because of her shabby appearance. Such trivial, foolish things, such perverted ideas of self cause shame. Shame is outward, not of the heart, shame is because of pride, not for sin.

Such an attitude makes the Arab moral and mental world truly topsyturvy. And because of these false ideas they are not ashamed of their ignorance; yes, worse, at times they even boast that they know nothing of



A NATIVE HOUSE

the world. While visiting with some women, the question was asked whether they had ever seen Bombay. The answer was, "No, we don't want to. This is the Moslems' country; that is enough for us." It may have been a case of sour grapes which caused this answer, but too often it is their bigotry that makes them speak out so. And so we often hear from the lips of the women, "Nahnu behem," "We are animals." It is true in many ways, for they have allowed the divine in them to be buried. So often, when appealing to them to educate their girls, they answer, "Girls! What is the use? They are animals, donkeys; they don't under-

stand." And when the women are appealed to for themselves the answer is the same. And this phrase, so often repeated by the men, and women also, has made them believe it true and well-nigh crushed out all aspirations to be anything else than animals. Some women hopelessly accept this verdict; others are too indolent to exert themselves; others are afraid to face the truth, while still others accept it with fatalistic pride in the religion which ordered the veiling of women, physically, mentally, and spiritually.

"Ma feeyeh khateeyeh," "There is no sin in me." If only the Moslems could be convinced that they are sinners half the battle would be won. They are quite ready to admit that all men are sinners, but their confession lacks the personal application. One day in the hospital, when the lesson was about sin and all present were included in the indictment, one woman said most vehemently, "I am *not* a sinner. You can go to Sheikh ——'s court and see if my name is recorded in his files for any crime at all!" When they actually must admit that certain acts are wrong, they say, "The devil made sport of me; the devil did it. God wrote it over me. What can I do?" Just as all good comes from God, so all evil proceeds from Him and He is responsible.

The Moslems' religion is a wonderful mixture of truth and falsehood, trust and worry, freedom and bondage, divine and human. They take a part of the truth for the whole and, instead of the gracious promise and precepts of our Heavenly Father beautifying their faith and comforting them in their daily experiences, this tendency has so blinded them that they grope about in the dark. We are here to clear away the mists so that they may see not only part, but all of the truth and that the truth may make them free.



Missionary Personalia

A cablegram has been received announcing the safe arrival in Cairo, Egypt, in late September, of Dr. Samuel M. Zwemer.

Rev. and Mrs. Fred J. Barny are expecting to return to the Arabian Mission at the end of this year, having fulfilled a year of most acceptable service in the Arcot Mission, especially needed because of the depletion of recent years in the force of that Mission.

Dr. and Mrs. C. S. G. Mylrea have been spending the hot months in Kashmir, India. Dr. Mylrea has recently received recognition of his services during the war from the British Government, which has made him an "Officer of the British Empire."

Rev. and Mrs. Dirk Dykstra and Miss M. C. Van Pelt have also spent the hot season in the vale of Kashmir.

Rev. G. J. Pennings, who in common with many of our Missionaries has been rendering Y. M. C. A. Service with the British Army in Mesopotamia during the war, is still with the Army at present on a punitive Afghanistan Expedition.

Rev. and Mrs. G. D. Van Peurseem have welcomed into their home another little son.

Miss Gertrud Schafheitlin and Dr. Sarah L. Hosmon sail for Arabia from San Francisco on the SS. "Venezuela," on October 18, 1919.

Rev. and Mrs. H. A. Bilkert have been spending the hot season in the hills of Southern India at Kodaikanal.

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